



C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER
GOVERNOR

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IDAHO RECOGNIZED AS LEADER IN ADVANCING USE OF HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

(BOISE) – Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter announced today that the federal government has recognized Idaho as a national leader in efforts to enhance the safety and quality of health care by embracing the use of health information technology.

Despite the near-universal use of electronic and automated processes across many industries – including banking, shopping, communication, news, and entertainment – America's medical system has remained stuck in the past, with doctors, pharmacies and hospitals often relying upon paper records. As a result, the various health care providers who treat each patient rarely have access to the same medical history, making diagnoses and developing treatment plans more difficult. Use of paper records also can undermine coordination of care between patients and all their care providers.

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Idaho Hospital Association, Idaho Health Data Exchange and the Qualis Health Washington and Idaho Regional Extension Center are working together to help Idaho's health care providers, hospitals and pharmacies adopt and implement technologies enabling them to communicate securely and electronically, in real time. The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology is specifically recognizing the efforts in Idaho because **97 percent of pharmacies in the state participate in e-prescribing**. That means doctors have been electronically sending patients' prescriptions directly to pharmacies, increasing the likelihood of medication compliance and reducing potential errors due to handwriting, patients losing prescriptions, or incorrect manual entry into the pharmacy system.

"I'm proud of the work being done to improve care of people throughout the state and are thrilled the effort is receiving national recognition," Governor Otter said. "Good communication among everyone involved in keeping a person healthy is vital to ensuring good outcomes. Technology today makes it easy and safe for doctors, nurses, pharmacists and others to communicate with each other on their patients' behalf. The result is fewer errors, and health care providers and their staff can spend more time actually talking with their patients. That's what we're working toward."

The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology – which has led the process of establishing the essential building blocks to support this secure exchange of health information – is recognizing the early achievements of many of the 56 U.S. states and territories participating in this effort.

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